

In memoriam



GYULA GRASSELLY
1920—1991

TO THE MEMORY OF PROF. DR. GY. GRASSELLY

T. SZEDERKÉNYI

It was a grievous loss for the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the József Attila University, his relatives, friends, colleagues and students, Hungarian and universal geology when GYULA GRASSELLY died on 13 November 1991 at the age of 72. He was the head of the Department of Earth Sciences, the vice president of the Regional Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Szeged and a merry gentleman brimming with life, who was still in full possession of his creative faculties. With his death, a period of Hungarian geochemical research of manganese and its ore, of which he was the animator and a determinant personality for several decades, came to an end. But the international scientific collaboration that he initiated still survives and gathers all the geologists and geochemists of the world who deal with manganese. Organic geochemistry, which he brought into being in Hungary, and several other Hungarian and international initiations of his are still alive and well.

GYULA GRASSELLY was born on 4th July 1920 in Szeged where he grew up and studied. Having passed his GCE exams with a mark of distinction, he enrolled at the University of Szeged to read chemistry and natural history, and graduated in 1943 with excellent marks. During his last term he studied under professor RAMDOHR in Berlin, where he gained a thorough knowledge of analysis of ores. In 1944 he passed a special pedagogical examination and earned a degree qualifying him as a secondary school teacher of chemistry and natural history.

He worked as a Master of Sciences from 1944, as an assistant lecturer from 1955, and as an assistant professor from 1956 at the Department of Mineralogy and Petrography of Szeged University (later: József Attila University), with professor SÁNDOR KOCH, who was a fatherly friend to him. In 1960 GRASSELLY was got out of the way for political reasons. He was rehabilitated in 1962 and appointed to a professorship in 1964. From 1968 to 1986 he worked as the head of the department, which was enlarged by the addition of geochemical studies. After 46 years of work he retired from the same department where he had started as a young teacher.

During his long career at the university he climbed all rungs of the ladder that can be ascended by a university citizen. He was a demonstrator, a research student, a temporary M. Sc., an M. Sc. and so on up to the appointment to head of the department as a professor. He was the headmaster of EÖTVÖS dormitory for 12 years, the dean of the Faculty of Sciences for 3 years, and a member of the University Council for 13 years. From 1968 to 1986, as the general editor of *Acta Mineralogica Petrographica*, he made the only Hungarian mineralogical-petrog-

raphical-geochemical review well-known world wide. The Ministry of Education also profited from his excellent ability at organizing and solving problems. He was employed for decades as either a member or the leader of several bodies and special committees within the Ministry. His fruitful work was acknowledged by the honourable title of "professor emeritus" from the University Council of JATE and by "The Flag-Order of the Republic" from the President of the Hungarian Republic.

By his own account, GYULA GRASSELLY went through three changes during his career. His love of biology made him interested in natural history, and when he was a first-year student at the university, ZOLTÁN SZABÓ, the headmaster of Eötvös Dormitory and member of the Academy, inspired him to choose chemistry as his second subject. He started to deal with mineralogy in 1941 when professor SÁNDOR KOCH came to Szeged. Professor KOCH became a model for the young demonstrator student on account of his honesty, his passion for his subject and the generous help he gave his students, as well as later on, during his career. So mineralogy became his principal area of study, within which he specialized in mineral chemistry and methods of mineral and ore analysis. This part of his career was closed by his first book, titled "Methods of Mineral and Ore Analysis", published in 1953 by Akadémiai Kiadó.

In 1952 he was made a "candidate in geological and mineralogical studies" for the results that he had achieved. He then made the final and determining change of his career. ELEMÉR SZÁDECZKY-KARDOSS, member of the Academy, asked GRASSELLY to read his handbook on "Geochemistry", published in 1955. According to his own words: "I thought my knowledge of this area was rather imperfect, so I had to work myself into the subject, how I have finally found my sort of work." His efforts were so successful that in 1959, as a result of his research on ionpotentials, the title of Academic Doctor was conferred upon him for his dissertation "The Role and Importance of Complex Anion-Potentials in Geochemistry".

In 1959 he began to devote himself to the mineralogy and geochemistry of the manganese regions of Hungary on behalf of industry. Realizing the number of questions that were waiting to be solved and the necessity of international collaboration, he organized the Commission on Manganese within the Association on the Genesis of Ore Deposits in 1967, and he was the president of the Commission until 1978. In 1974 he initiated the "Genesis of Manganese Ore Deposits" project, within the IGCP (International Geological Correlation Programme), of which he was the leader as well until 1978. The apex of his career is crowned by the monography of three volumes titled „Geology and Geochemistry of Manganese; Mineralogy, Geochemistry, Methods" that he published together with I. M. VARENTSOV in 1980 at Akadémiai Kiadó, which is still a well-known and highly appreciated handbook for researchers of manganese.

There is also another important area of research work that professor GRASSELLY started on the basis of industrial signals. This was a complex geochemical and mineralogical-petrographical analysis of deposits containing organic compounds in order to define the role and effect of different natural factors in the period of their petrification. Essentially, instituting the analysis of insoluble organic compounds, he established the profile of Hungarian organic-geochemical research studies.

Due to his excellent ability to make connections and organize, and the outstanding results of his private research, professor GRASSELLY was elected vice president of the IUGS (International Union for Geological Sciences) from 1972 to 1980 at the XXIVth International Geological Congress in Montreal in 1972. In 1982 he was made the head of the IUGS Advisory Board for the Research Development Programme, and later the leader of the ICL Bureau (the international lithosphere research programme). There has not been another Hungarian geologist for the last 80 years who has held such an important international office. Professor GRASSELLY has had a great influence on the international development of geology with his superb work of organizing and shaping scientific research in the field.

The Advisory Board of the Institution of Cultural Connections, the Hungarian UNESCO Committee, the PUGWASH Hungarian National Committee and the IUGS Hungarian National Committee have also enjoyed the fruits of his estimable international scientific experiences and connections.

The Hungarian Academy of Sciences, in appreciation of the scientific achievements of GYULA GRASSELLY, elected him a corresponding member of the Geochemical Scientific Committee, of which he was the head from 1976 to 1980. Between 1980 and 1986 he was the president of the Geological Scientific Committee. In 1976, at the general meeting of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences he was made a corresponding member, and in 1982 a standard member. His ability to analyze problems, his energy and diplomatic sense had a good effect on the Department of Geological Mining Sciences, as well as on the presidency of the Academy. In 1990 he was elected head of the Department. He could see all the disadvantages of the economic and political changes from a geologist's point of view very clearly, and concentrated his efforts to avoid these problems. He effected changes in the focus of concerns in geology and tried to find its place in the new economic circumstances. While fulfilling this plan successfully, he was carried away by a sudden death.

Professor GRASSELLY always remained a resident of Szeged and was always loyal to the traditions of the city. He also belonged to the group of scientists who have proved that they did not have to work in Budapest to gain worldwide reputation. His positive local patriotism was manifested in several social and scientific activities. He was a member of the Regional Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Szeged from its foundation, and also its president from 1986 to 1990, and vice president until his death. He "re-organized" — in the real sense of the word — the institution and spread its activities out to all the counties of the South-East, exhilarating an energetic scientific life in them. The city of Szeged appreciated his achievements, career and loyalty with the prize of "Foundation for Szeged". His last activity in Szeged was the hard work of organizing and leading the restoration of the Szeged Centre of Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The beautiful building, that in its function has become worthy of Szeged traditions, still preserves his plane. It is a sad thing that he could not be present at the inauguration of the renewed scientific centre.

A wonderful career has been ended by death. Professor GRASSELLY has left us, getting up from his desk as if he was only leaving for a few minutes before coming back to finish the work that he had been doing. Yet he did not leave anything unfinished! He lived a full life. As an excellent teacher, honoured by



both his students and his colleagues, he gained everything that a university professor can. As a scientist, he worked fruitfully until the last minute, and still had time to enjoy the pleasures of life. He was a real human in this sense of the word! Let his final observation stand here as a message for us:

“Without clear ideals, sensible aims, human connections with purpose and responsibility for a larger community of people life is just a dreary vegetating. Noble elevation and internal freedom are needed for all these. The last few decades have much decreased these things. Despite this, I state and I believe that it is high time for us to pull down the “Hungarian Wailing Wall” with new faith and knowledge, by bringing together the values of our small communities and starting a social chain-reaction, we must take upon ourselves the break-through towards the rebirth of the nation.”